





T H E
P R E F A C E.

CANDID READER,



*W*HEN I first composed this Sermon, I had no thoughts of publishing it, after any other manner, than from the Pulpit; but being much importuned, by some who heard it, to send it to the Press, I have, for some Reasons, which they urged for my so doing, complied with their Request: One of which was, that it was suggested that one who had not had the Advantage of accademical Learning, was not capable of forming that Discourse; and therefore, I had only entertained them with a Sermon, I had found somewhere ready made to my Hand. Had this been the only Reason, perhaps, I might have chose to have lain under the scandal of this, rather than have troubled the World with what was not worth their while to peruse. I must confess, to supply the want of a liberal Education (which

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(which I acknowledge I never had) I have given my self pretty much to reading the Works of some excellent and useful Divines of several Perswasions; and by this means, having made something of theirs my own, it may so happen, that some Expressions here and there, in this Sermon, may be met with in some Authors; (and who that reads with a design to profit by it, can write any Thing which no Man ever said before?) but to point at the Author, the Book, or Page, where what I have delivered is to be found in the same Method and Expressions, is what I am not able to do, except as in the Margin. But that which swayed most with me, was, that the Subject treated on was worthy to be recommended; and that it might be of use to calm and sweeten the Tempers of some good Men, who are apt to recommend their own Sentiments, and cry down those of such as differ from them, with too much Warmth and Heat: This is what, I confess, is greatly wanted; and if this will contribute to so good a Work, I shall not repent that I have complied with the Request of my Friends: But if it shall appear, after perusal, that the Subject is not so well handled as to deserve a Publication, the blame ought not to lie on me, but on those, who extorted it from me.

MATT.



M A T T. V. 5. .

Blessed are the Meek; for they shall inherit the Earth.



WHEN we consider the amazing Manifestations of our Saviour's Love to lost Sinners, in laying down his Life, to redeem us from that Misery and Destruction we had entail'd upon our selves, by revolting from God, and abandoning our Reason, and forsaking the Guide and leading Principle of our Natures; nothing can be more ungrateful, than to suppose that what he has made our Duty, and the Condition of our enjoying that Happiness he hath so dearly purchased for us, is either impracticable, or unreasonable.

It is true, indeed, the Man who has habituated himself to a vicious and corrupt way of living, or has all along entertained a Fondness for the Customs and Fashions of the World, must undergo some considerable Struggles in his Mind, before he can bring himself off from that Bias and Propension he has contracted by use: For, notwithstanding he be convinced of the Reasonableness of altering his Course, yet his not being used to the

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Practice of Virtue and Goodness, will make his Attempts to yield a Submission to the Laws of Christ appear hard and difficult.

But this can be no just Reflection on the Precepts of our Saviour: It only shews us, that our Natures may be so far corrupted by sinful Habits, as to cause in us an Aversion to things that are in themselves beautiful and excellent, and a Backwardness to submit to what would be our highest Interest and Advantage.

And indeed, on this Account it is no easy matter to follow the Directions of our Lord and Master, to become crucify'd to the World with its Affections and Lusts, and to have our Conversation in Heaven.

But what Method do we take to remove these Obstacles? Do we impartially, and with a sincere Desire to be inform'd what will best conduce to our real Interest, strictly examine into the Nature of those Laws which are propos'd to us for the Rule of our Conduct? Or do we not rather cautiously avoid reflecting? lest by so doing we should be forc'd to condemn our selves for acting contrary to our own Reason, whilst we live in the Neglect of our Duty; for we have no other Method to avoid complying with it (with any tolerable Peace to our selves) than by representing things in a false Light, viewing them through the Mists of Error, and taking Appearances for Realities.

And I have, sometimes, been apt to think, that the main Reason why Mankind are so generally misled, is the unbounded Love of Liberty: They are very fond of every thing that is of their own choosing, but hate to be obliged to any thing, tho' never so just and reasonable. What else can possibly be the cause of so general a Defection among
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Men, since the Precepts of Christ are so suitable to the Perfections of the divine Being, so agreeable to a rational Nature, and so conducive to our real Honour and Interest, both in our private and publick Capacities?

I am very certain, had we been obliged upon Pain of Damnation to have hardned our Hearts, and stop't our Ears against the Cries and Importunities of the Indigent and Necessitous, to have been implacably malicious, cruel, or envious; to have resented the least Provocation, and to have taken all Opportunities to revenge the Affront given us; to be saucy and impertinent to our Betters, contentious and quarrellsome towards our Equals, or haughty and insulting over those who are our Dependants; we could not but have looked on the Obligations to such a Behaviour very unfit for a wise Governor to impose, or for Creatures in our Circumstances to submit to, or comply with; and we must necessarily conclude them to be very preposterous and unreasonable.

How could we brook such a Law, think you, that required us to be false to our Word, unjust in our Dealings, or unfaithful to our Trust; that we should rob or murder our Neighbour, or transform our selves into Swine by Drunkenness, Gluttony, and Excess? Sould we not groan under such tyrannical Injunctions as these; such perfect Contradictions to the Reason of our own Mind, and the natural Notions we have of Good and Evil, so destructive to our own private Peace, and the Benefit of Society?

And yet, though the contrary to all this be made our Duty, what Shifts, what Evasions are made use of to escape it? what Excuses formed to vindicate the Neglect of it? and what Dress is it very often put into, to hide its Beauty, and make

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it contemptible? Whilst the Prodigal shall call his Profuseness by the Name of Liberality, the Rash and Heady deem himself courageous, and the covetous Man stile his Stinginess, Parsimony and Frugality; the christian Virtues of Self-denial and regulating the Appetites, are judged a superstitious Folly, and an Abridgment of innocent Pleasures. To forgive an Injury, is represented * as a proper Method to invite another, and making the innocent Man to become the Sport of the Malicious and Ill-natur'd: To love an Enemy is esteemed contrary to Nature, and giving the Lye to the Passions, and therefore impossible to be done: And as for Humility and Meekness, † they are two such mean and narrow-spirited Endowments, such dull and servile Dispositions, as are fit only for Men of low Fortunes, and which tend to nothing but to infect the Soul with such a poor Pusillanimity, as will render him who practises them, totally unfit for any brave or generous Action. These are the common Sentiments of an unthinking World; and these the Reasons which they themselves deem sufficient to excuse them for their not living up to the best System of Rules that was ever exhibited to Mankind.

The whole christian Oeconomy is excellently useful to promote our Peace and Happiness in this Life; and there is a Blessedness annexed to a due Conformity to it, which will be compleat and perfect in the Life to come. But that Part of it which now lies before us, as recommended to our Practice, is Meekness; *Blessed are the Meek, for they shall inherit the Earth.*

* Nichol's Conference with a Theist, Part III. pag. 268.

† Idem p. 262.

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The Method I shall take to treat on this Subject, shall be

First, To explain the Duty here recommended.

Secondly, Propose to you our Saviour's Example, as an Enconragement and Motive to the Practice of it.

Thirdly, Shew the Blessedness of such a Disposition, or the Advantage that accrues from it; in which I shall take notice of that in particular, which is annexed to it in our Text; *viz. They shall inherit the Earth.*

1st, What are we to understand by Meekness? This I conceive to be a Temper of Mind opposite to Wrath and Fury; which gives the Possessor of it a full Power and Command over his irascible Faculties, and prevents all Eruptions of undue Anger; by which his Resentments are kept under to such a Degree, that all Discomposure in his own Mind is prevented, and they are never suffered to break out and exert themselves to the Injury or Damage of another. It is the direct contrary to Malice and Revenge, and can receive an Abuse from the Peevish and Ill-natur'd, without seeking for, or so much as desiring an Opportunity to retaliate it; and whenever it is in his Power, he plainly manifests, by his not making use of it, that it is not in his Inclination to recompense Evil with Evil; but on the contrary, that he is very ready to forgive Offences; and not only so, but to do Good as Opportunity shall offer, even to his Enemy.

The truly meek Man is (according to the Apostle's Phrase) *A Child in Malice* *; i. e. they are alike harmless and undesigning, and like such he can soon put up the Wrongs and Injuries that are

* 1 Cor, xiv, 20

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done him : Though he is not insensible of unkind Treatment when he meets with it, yet he endeavours to wear off the Impressions from his Mind, and to let it die with him : He entertains no Heart-burnings, or ill Intentions against him who has done him an unfriendly Office ; carries on no Plots and Contrivances to repay him in his own way, but rather pities him on Account of the Unhappiness of his Temper, and the Mischief he does to himself by his irregular and unchristian Behaviour ; and he prays for him, that he may, in order to his own Safety, see his Evil and repent of it ; and so far as is consistent with Prudence, he treats him with a sweet, friendly, and affable Behaviour, that he may, if possible, bring him to Reason, by a kind and engaging Demeanour towards him.

In short, Meekness is a Virtue that renders him who has it, cool and sedate in his Temper : his Mind remains calm and composed, notwithstanding the Provocations he may meet with from without to ruffle and disturb him ; he has an entire Mastery over himself, and is secured from those common Impressions which are the certain Effects of a peevish Impatience ; he is very backward to take Offence, and candid in his Construction of what appears to be a Fault, until he has carefully weigh'd and examin'd it ; and when he has just Cause to be angry, he never suffers his Resentments to exceed the Bounds of Reason and Religion, but preserves in himself a Readiness to be reconciled to him who has used him ill, upon the most modest and easy Conditions possible.

Now, according to this Definition of Meekness, or rather, the Description of one who is meek, we find the Duty here recommended is a Branch of the great Law of Charity, as *St. Paul* describes

it :

it * ; *Charity suffereth long, and is kind ; Charity envieth not ; Charity vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up ; doth not behave it self unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no Evil ; rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in Truth ; beareth all Things, believeth all Things, hopeth all Things, endureth all Things.* And it is what he enjoins, when he tells the *Ephesians* †, that *all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and evil Speaking, should be put away from them, with all Malice ; and that they should be kind one to another, and tender hearted, forgiving one another.* All this, I say, is signified by contained in, or comprehended under this Virtue of Meekness.

Now, such a Government and Regulation of the Passions as is here recommended, is by Christians (how much soever we fail in the Practice of it) generally acknowledged to be a Duty, when those things that are apt to raise our Resentments, are aim'd and levell'd at our selves only. But there are many who conceive, that when the Cause of God and Religion is like to suffer, they are not only allowed, but it is their Duty to be hot and furious in the Defence of it ; and verily believe they are doing Service to God, and the Cause they are contending for, even whilst they are transgressing some of the most weighty and material Laws of Christianity : If by doing this, they express their Affection for, and Concern to defend and support the Doctrines of it, all their Transports of Passion and Peevishness, Anger and Ill-Nature, pass with them for a holy Zeal, and pious Vehemence ; and all this, and more, is sacred under this Cover, that it proceeds from a religious Concern for the Honour of God, and the Truths

* 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 6, 7,

† Eph. iv. 31, 32:

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of the Gospel. So that Hatred and Envy, Fierceness and Uncharitableness, are accounted the proper Instruments to promote and advance the meek and charitable, the gentle and peaceable Religion of the holy and humble Jesus.

Strange Inconsistency this! to imagine that the Superstructure is best supported by destroying the Foundation. For what do they less, who wholly divest themselves of Love and Charity (which is the Characteristick of a true Disciple of Christ) through a Fondness for some Notions or Opinions, which when once they see Reason to receive themselves as Truths, they will impose on every one else, on Pain of their highest Displeasure? Such fiery Zeal serves to burn rather than enlighten: It may kindle Flames of Strife and Contention, but will never produce a Warmth for true Piety and Goodness, neither in the World, nor in the Church of God. And would Men give themselves the Liberty to reflect, they would see, not only the Wickedness, but also the extreme Folly of pretending to propagate true Religion by such Methods: For Heat and Violence is a Hindrance, instead of an Advantage to it; and hardly any thing can give greater Grounds of Suspicion that the Doctrines so furiously insisted on, are not according to Godliness, than that the Spirit and Temper with which they are recommended, is directly contrary to his in whose Name they are proposed to us, and by Virtue of whose Authority we are required to receive and embrace them. *The Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God* *. How right soever we may be in our Sentiments, and how certain soever we may be that we are so; yet this is not the proper Method to

* James i. 20.

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convince others of their Truth and Reasonableness. And therefore St. Paul tells Titus *, that those who would advance the Interest of our Saviour, should be put in Mind that they *speake Evil of no Man; that they be no Brawlers, but gentle, shewing all Meekness to all Men: And that they must not be self-willed, nor soon angry; but lovers of good Men †:* (And such may very possibly be amongst those who are not entirely right in their Sentiments, about some obscure, or some less necessary Points in Religion.) He directs that they should be *sober and just, holy and temperate; and that by holding fast the faithful Word they had been taught, they might be able, by sound Doctrine, (only) both to exhort, and to convince the Gainsayers ‡.*

The same he repeats to Timothy §; O Man of God (says he) follow after Righteousness, Godliness, Faith, Love, Patience, Meekness. The Servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient, in Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the Acknowledging of the Truth **. And for this, as well as other things directed to, he recommends his own Practice as a Pattern to walk by: Thou hast fully known my Doctrine, manner of Life, Purpose, Faith, Long-suffering, Charity, Patience ††. Continue thou in the Things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them ‡‡. And the same he directs the Churches of Galatia to do: Brethren, if a Man be overtaken in a Fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the Spirit of Meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted: bear ye one another's Burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ §§.

* Tit. iii. 2:

† Chap. i. 7, 8.

‡ Ver. 9:

§ 1 Tim. vi. 11.

** 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

†† 2 Tim.

iii. 10.

‡‡ Ver. 14.

§§ Gal. vi. 1, 2.

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True Religion stands not in such need of being supported, as to admit of the Breach of its Rules, in order to defend its Doctrines: And if we apprehend we can do it any Service by such Methods, we are grossly mistaken. Religion is not preserv'd, but lost by Feuds and Contentions: Heat and Violence very often wastes and destroys it, but never strengthens it. Our Zeal and Concern for God's Honour can, on no Account, vindicate and justify the Violation of any of his Laws: God can't be honour'd, nor Religion advanced, by disobeying his Precepts; and therefore it is one of the greatest Absurdities we can be guilty of, to break through the holy Institutions of the Gospel, in order to advance it. Religion can never justify such Conduct as this, but utterly explodes and condemns it.

I am not now pleading that we should lay aside all Concern for Truth: But our Saviour has marked out the Way by which we ought to propagate it; a Way far differing from that I am now dissuading from. Would we shew our Care and Concern for the Growth and Increase of true Christian Knowledge, and contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints; let us do it after a pious and discreet manner: We may plead for it, and represent the Truth and Goodness of it, in order to recommend it; we are to defend it from the Aspersions cast on it by the Ignorant or Malicious, and to endeavour to rectify the Mistakes of those who oppose or mis-apprehend it. But then, this must be attended with an upright and exemplary Behaviour; we must manifest the Goodness of this Religion we plead for, by shewing forth the Fruits of it, in a meek, modest, and peaceable Carriage and Deportment; that if any, through In-attention to the Word of God, cannot be

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be prevailed with thereby to receive the Truth in the Love of it, they may yet be won by beholding the good Effects of it in us.

The most effectual Method we can take to create in Men's Minds a good Esteem for the Principles of the Christian Religion, is, to practise well, and shew forth the Beauty and Loveliness of what we would recommend to others by our own Example: This, though it insinuates gently, and works as it were insensibly, yet carries such a Force and Power with it, that it very often prevails. To this also we must add our affectionate, fervent, and importunate Prayers to God, that he would enlighten the Minds of the Ignorant; that he would quicken and stir up the Slothful and Inconsiderate; that he would mollify the Hearts of the Stubborn and Obstinate; that Knowledge may increase, and true Religion gain Ground and flourish in the World. And whilst our Care and Concern for the Cause of Christ discovers it self after this manner, and is circumscribed within these Bounds and Limits, we are acting in our own Sphere, and serving Religion in a way that is very commendable, and which every true Christian ought to take to promote and advance it. But we must never throw aside our Innocence to defend the Truth, nor promote Orthodoxy of Faith, by any Methods that are sinful and displeasing to God.

For the Truth of what I have now asserted, I shall appeal to the Apostle James; * *Who is a wise Man, and endued with Knowledge amongst you? Let him shew out of a good Conversation his Works with Meekness of Wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and Strife in your Hearts, glory not, and lye not against*

* James iii. 13, to ult.

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the Truth, (you are not the real Disciples of Christ, nor the true Children of God, how great soever your Pretences are to Religion!) this Wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish: for where Envy and Strife is, there is Confusion, and every evil Work. But the Wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, without Partiality, and without Hypocrisy. And the Fruit of Righteousness is sown in Peace of them that make Peace.

These Words needs no Comment. The plain Sense of them is, that nothing but Wickedness and Distraction can be the Result of a proud, censorious, and contentious Disposition: But the Wisdom and Temper of true Religion is discovered in the Behaviour of him who has it. It renders him mild and courteous, candid and charitable, and sincere in all his Actions. And whoever is of this peaceable and good Temper, and endeavours to persuade others to be so also, will not fail to reap the happy Fruits, and blessed Effects of it. But this I am to consider under the third Head: And therefore shall proceed,

2dly, To recommend to you our Saviour's Example, as an Encouragement and Motive to endeavour after the Virtue of Meekness. But before I enter upon this, it may be necessary to premise (in order to prevent an Objection against the Practice of Meekness and good Temper, when we are contending for the Cause of God, and the Faith of the Gospel, from the Example of Christ himself; as, when with a great deal of Sharpness and Severity, he reproved the Scribes and Pharisees; whipped the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple; overthrew the Tables of the Money-Changers, and the like). I say I would premise, that

that whatever our Lord did, consider'd only as his Action, this is not a sufficient Warrant for us to do the same thing. There is no one who professes himself to be a Christian, but will allow he had a sufficient Warrant or Authority for what he did: but we must not therefore conclude that every thing is our Duty, which we can cite his Practice for.

It would be a great Presumption in us to pretend to imitate him in his forty Days Fast, or by walking on the Sea: But how could we excuse our selves from this, if our Saviour's Practice, consider'd only as such, must be the Rule of our Duty? When, therefore, we are requir'd to follow the Example of Christ, and to walk in his Steps, it is only in those things which his Laws have made our Duty. We can draw no Argument from his Actions to Influence our own, but in those Cases where what he did were Instances and Illustrations of his own Precepts. It is not his Practice, but his Command that constitutes our Duty; and whenever he does those things himself, which he enjoyns us to do, he then exemplifies our Duty to us in the several Forms and Circumstances of it, and gives us a more sensible Manifestation of the Intent and Meaning of what he has made our Duty. The adding his Practice where he has given his Precept, serves for a clearer Illustration of it. But where he has given us no Command, his Practice alone obliges us to nothing, nor makes any thing become our Duty which before was not so. The Truth of this Observation will easily appear from examining all those Instances wherein the Scriptures do recommend to us the Example of Christ; where it is constantly in such Cases as were previously our Duty, by the Authority of his Laws, and would have

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have been so, though he had not condescended to set us a Pattern by his own Practice.

But to be meek and moderate in our Tempers ; to have the mastery and government over our Passions, is a christian Duty by virtue of the Laws of Christ : And he calls upon us to learn this from him. He lays down a Rule for us to walk by, and then, like a kind Tutor, he opens and explains it, by doing before us the Thing he requires us to do. *Learn of me what Meekness is ; Learn of me the Fitness and Reasonableness of it ; and also the Possibility of attaining to it.* For he that proposes himself to us for our Pattern, was in all Things made like unto us ; had the same Passions and Affections that we have ; and was subject to the same natural Infirmities that we are : He hungred, tired, slept, was sorrowful, and felt Pains and Agonies ; and was in all Points tempted like as we are, though without Sin. And it is he, who under these Circumstances, gave us the Rules for our Instruction, that hath traced out the Way to our complying with them by the Print of his own Footsteps, and hath left us an Example of Obedience in himself to those Things he has made our Duty ; or had declared to us to be the Will of his Father. And now let us take a View of him as our Example in this Particular, and consider the admirable Meekness, and Sedateness of Mind, which he constantly preserved in himself. None had ever more strong Provocations to Wrath and Revenge than he had ; the Affronts and Indignities, which were offered him, were beyond Expression ! And tho' he was thus ungratefully treated, yet it made no Alteration in his Temper ; his Passions were kept within their proper Bounds, and always subjected to his Reason. *Though he was a Man*

of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief *, yet being reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously †. He gave his Back to the Smiters, and his Cheeks to them that plucked off the Hair, and he hid not his Face from shame and spiting || He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his Mouth: He was brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep before her Shearers is dumb, so he opened not his Mouth §.

Though he was as sensible of the ill Treatment he met with from a wicked and ungrateful People, as any one could be: Though he knew that his Enemies were implacably malicious, and sought his Destruction: " Though his natural " Aversion to Shame, and Pain, and Death, was " the same as ours is; yet he over-ruled all " this, and never suffered his Resentments " to proceed to the least Degree of Hatred. But " as he taught his Disciples, so he practised himself; and earnestly desired the Welfare of the " most barbarous of his Enemies **": *He did Good to them that hated him, and prayed for those who despitefully used and persecuted him.* Let us behold him under the Agonies of Sorrow, and Concern of Mind; *Matt. xxvi. 38, &c.* Which Condition is apt to make us fretful and peevish; and which magnifies in us the least Shadow of Unkindness from our Friends: Let us observe with what Mildness he treats those his Disciples, whom he had informed how it was with him, and of whom he had requested, that they would watch with him on that Occasion, when he found them Sleeping; which might have been very justly imputed by him to have been a certain Sign

* Isa. liii. 3:

† 1 Pet. ii. 23.

|| Isa. 1. 6.

§ Isa. liii. 7:

** Bragg on the Passion, pag. 368.

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of great Unconcernedness of Mind, and Coolness of Affection towards him: But he passes all by, and just put them in Mind they had forgot his Request, by only saying, *What, could you not watch with me one Hour?* And when by their Silence they tacitly acknowledged, they had nothing to urge as an Excuse for their Fault, he himself will find one for them, and imputes it merely to their Infirmary. *The Spirit indeed is willing:* "Your Mind I know is sincere, and
" you want not a Will to do your Duty; but
" you want Strength to prevail over the natural Cravings of the Body*:" *The Flesh is weak.*

Consider also, how he treats a false deceitful Friend, who betrays him into the Hands of his professed Enemies, by a Token of the sincerest Love and Affection: "Such Treachery as this
" merited the most emphatical Expressions of an
" exasperated and enraged Mind; but with what
" wonderful Mildness was this Monster of Ingratitude treated by our Lord †?" He says but just enough to convince him he knew his Treachery: *Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a Kiss §?*

So also, when he is seized and apprehended by the Roman Soldiers, and by them rudely hurried to the High-Priest's Palace **; he calmly tells them, they might have saved themselves the Trouble of coming thus armed, or of watching an Opportunity to lay hold of him, seeing he made his publick Appearance daily in the Temple ††. And when one of his Disciples draws his Sword in his Defence, he lets him know he has

* Clarke on the Evangelists, on Matt. xxvi. 41. † Fowler's
design of Christianity, pag. 29. § Luke xxii. 48.

** Ver. 54.

†† Ver. 52, 53.

no need of his Assistance ; but that he could, were he so minded, immediately destroy his Enemies by a Power from Heaven * : But his Business was not to conquer by Fighting, but by Patience, and Suffering. And when *Peter* had rashly smitten the High Priest's Servant ; he speedily repairs the Damage, even though he, to whom it was done, was his Enemy †.

So again, when he is (contrary to the Laws of Justice and Equity) smitten by a mean Servant, whilst under Examination before the Council, and in the High - Priest's Presence || ; for which, it is reasonable to suppose, he might have had the Delinquent punished, had he insisted on it : But he meekly puts up the Affront, with saying only thus ; *If I have spoken Evil, bear Witness of the Evil ; but if Well, why smitest thou me § ?* Such a Sedateness, under such a Provocation, is wonderfully Great, and worthy our imitation.

But to conclude this Head : With what an admirable Calmness and Composedness of Mind, did he bear the Mockings, the Bufferings, and other the contumelious Behaviour of the *Jews* towards him ! “ Look upon him under the Shame, the
“ Ignominy, and painful Sufferings on the Cross ;
“ encountering at once with the Agonies of Death,
“ the Revilings and Contradictions of Sinners,
“ and the hidings of God's Face ; and all this
“ without the least shew of Impatience or dis-
“ composure of Spirit ** ” But he freely forgave the Injuries that were done him, and intreated his Father, and that even in the midst of his Torments (when he had Cause to be most high-

* Matt. xxvi. 53. 54.
xviii. 22. § Ver. 23.

† Luke xxii. 51.

|| John

** Norris on the Beatitudes, pag. 50.

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ly exasperated against his Enemies) that he would forgive them too ; and with his last Breath pleads with great Earnestness , and urges the utmost that could be said in their Favour , in order to mitigate their Crime ; that what they did was through Ignorance: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do **.

Having thus, in some few Instances, laid before you, the mild and meek Behaviour of our Blessed Lord, in order to stir you up to follow his Example : I shall, in the last place, for your further Encouragement therein, consider the Blessedness of it. *Blessed are the Meek.*

First, It is in its own Nature pleasant and comfortable: It is a wholesome and healthful Disposition of Mind, and makes almost any Condition of Life tolerable and easie: It takes off the Edge of Misfortunes, that they can't wound us; whilst Anger and Impatience is a Sickness of the Soul, which renders the greatest Train of Successes insipid and tasteless. And whatever the inconsiderate Part of the World may think of it; he, who has the entire Command of himself, has obtained a more noble Conquest, than *Pompey* or *Cæsar* could ever boast of. For this, I have the Attestation of the wisest of Men: *He that is slow to Anger, is better than the Mighty; and he, who ruleth his Spirit, than he who taketh a City †.* This Christian Temper makes him Valiant and Heroic; and begets in him an invincible Firmness and Steadiness of Mind against all dangerous and troublesome Accidents whatever. He is always present with himself, and constant to his own Reason, and resigned to the Conduct of Providence; saying with good *Old Eli*, *it is*

* Luke xxiii. 34

† Prov. xvi. 32.

the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good *. But where Anger and Peevishness gain the Ascendant, it lets in every Trouble that assaults us, to spoil and ravage us at Pleasure; and exposes all our Peace and Tranquillity to the mercy of every Trifle; and renders us incapable to bear the Shock of any cross Accident, how mean and inconsiderable soever it be. Besides, Meekness is a very winning and engaging Temper of Mind; it is called an Ornament †; it sets a Man off, and makes him amiable in the Eyes of others: It commands Esteem and Veneration; and Men of Sense and Understanding cannot but value the Man in whom it shines. And it has a very great Tendency to endear him to his very Enemies. *Esau*, a prophane Person, greatly admir'd it in his Brother *Jacob* ‡; And it so wrought on him, as to turn his Resentments into kind Embraces; and melted him into Tears. And this, as *Solomon* observes, is the usual Effect of Meekness, *A soft Answer turneth away Wrath* §.

Secondly, They are Blessed, inasmuch as they are greatly esteemed and approved of God. This Grace is highly valuable in his Sight; and those who are possess'd of it, are the Objects of his peculiar Care and Regard. *A meek and quiet Spirit, is in the sight of God a great Price* **. What Pains do we generally take to gain Credit and Reputation from Men, who are our Betters? We use our utmost Endeavours, that our Actions and Expressions may please, when we are in their Presence. We exert our selves, and do our best, that we may obtain their Approbation and Ap-

* 1 Sam. iii. 18,

§ Prov, xv. 1,

† 1 Pet. iii. 4.

‡ Gen. xxxiii. 4.

** 1 Pet. iii. 4.

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plause Now, by the exercise of this Vertue, we gain the Approbation of the highest and best of Beings; we obtain Credit and Reputation with God. He looks down with Pleasure upon him, or her, who is thus beautifully adorned, and has a special Regard to the Meek and lowly: As says the *Psalmist*; *The Lord taketh Pleasure in his People; he will beautify the Meek with Salvation* *. He cares for them in an eminent Manner and Degree, and appears for their help in the times of Distress and Difficulty, to the Terror and Amazement of the Beholders. *Thou didst cause Judgment to be heard from Heaven; the Earth feared and was still; when God arose to Judgment, to save all the Meek of the Earth* †. He who has the supreme Power over all Persons and Things, takes them under his own Protection, and furnishes them with what he sees they stand in need of, for their Comfort and Encouragement in well-doing; and carries them through the several Changes and Vicissitudes of this Life, and safely conducts them to the Inheritance he has provided for them in the next. He guides them by his Counsel, and afterwards receives them to Glory.

Thirdly, They are Blessed, inasmuch as this Temper of Mind fits and disposes them for growth and improvement in Vertue and Goodness, and for the greater Increase in Divine and Spiritual Wisdom. *The Meek he will guide in Judgment; the Meek will he teach his ways* ‡. He who would know the Will of God effectually, must be taught by the Spirit of God; and he who would do it acceptably, must be aided and assisted by the same. And therefore St. James directs those who lack Wisdom, to ask it of God § And

* *Psalm*. cxlix. 4.

† *Psalm*. lxxvi. 8. 9.

‡ *Psalm*. xxv. 9.

§ *James* i. 5.

St. Paul prays for the *Ephesians*, that God would give them the Spirit of Wisdom, and of Revelation in the Knowledge of himself *. Now, there is no Subject so fit to receive, or so capable to profit under the Direction and Influence of the Spirit of God, as he who is meek; who is quiet and composed in his Mind. The Soul that is calm and sedate, listens attentively, while the Spirit communicates freely of its Treasure; opening and explaining the Mysteries of the Gospel; shewing the Justice and Goodness of Providence; confirming his Faith in God's Promises; and perswading him to Constancy and Perseverance, by the most powerful Arguments of God's Love, and his own Happiness. Besides, this Temper of Mind makes him more capable to discern Truth from Error; it gives him leisure and opportunity to reflect and consider; whereby, he lies less open to Sophistry and Deceit: Whilst turbulent and unquiet Passions keep out the Spirit of God from the Mind, and extremely hinder its Operation. They dethrone Reason, prevent Attention, and deprive of the most proper Means of being set right, and better informed, and of improving in true Knowledge, and sincere Obedience. And therefore, if we will receive the Word of God, so as to obtain Salvation thereby, it must be in Meekness †.

From what has been said, we may gather what is intended by the Promise in the Text: *The Meek shall inherit the Earth*; that is, they have every thing in it necessary to their Comfort and Advantage. They have a perfect calm and serenity in their Minds: They are approved of

* Eph. 1, 17]

† James 1. 21.

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Men: They are highly esteemed, and valued of God: They are the peculiar Care of his Providence; and he dwells in them by his Spirit, to enlighten and instruct them, and to strengthen and comfort them.

For we are not to suppose, that our Saviour assures them they are to raise goodly Estates, and grow Rich and Great in the World; both because these things were accounted by him too mean too be the Reward of Vertue; and also, because this would have been inconsistent with what he, at other Times, had said to them; when he cautions them to beware of Coverousness, and warns them of the danger of Riches, and the difficulty of reaching Heaven with these Incumbrances; when he recommends to them the Contempt of the World, and dissuades them from laying up earthly Treasure; and acquaints them, that Man's Life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

But *the Meek inherit the Earth*, in that, let them possess little or much, they have the truest Enjoyment of what they have, of any Men in the World. For it is not the Quantity, but the true Relish of what we have, that makes Life comfortable. And therefore, a Man may have a great deal in his Possession, and yet have no real Comfort of what he possesses; whilst others, whose Circumstances are mean, may have a great deal of Comfort and Satisfaction. And this Blessing has he obtained who is meek. His Mind is filled with Pleasure and Tranquility; and every Mercy he receives has its true Relish, and yields him a real Satisfaction: He enjoys with Quiet and Contentment what God gives him, be it more or less: According to that of the *Psalmist*;

Psalmist * ; a little that the righteous Man bath (whom before he calls the meak) is better than the Riches of many wicked †. Though they are liable to Losses and Disappointments in the World, as well as others, yet their Peace and Quiet is always in their own Hands, and none can deprive them of it. In this it is, *they inherit the Earth* ||, in delighting themselves in the abundance of Peace.

And now one would think, since such Blessings as these attend this Virtue, you should be enamoured with it; since the Favour of God, and the whole Pleasure and Satisfaction of Life depends upon it, you should study and practise it.

It is not a sufficient Excuse for your Neglect of this Duty, that you are naturally fretful, or apt to be passionate; or that you meet with great Provocations, and the like. Consider the Character you bear: You pride your selves in the Name of Christians: You bless God you are neither *Jews* nor *Mahometans*. But remember, if you indulge what you call your natural Infirmities, you are yet in a State of Nature, and Strangers to the Spirit of Christ. *And they that are in the Flesh* (i e. who give way to its irregular Excursions) *cannot please God* §. *And if any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his* **.

Therefore, I say, these Propensions and Provocations are insufficient Excuses. The things you urge in your favour, are your fault, and require a serious, and hearty Repentance. God demands that you be meek; and if you endeavour after this Temper with Seriousness and Resolution, and use proper means for the attaining

* Psal. xxxvii. 16;
§ Rom, viii, 8;

† Ver, 11;

|| Psal. xxxviii: 11;

** Ver, 9.

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it; he will remove all Impediments, and enable you to practise it. Consider the Beauty and Advantage of this Grace; set before you the Example of our Lord and Master, *who endured the contradiction of Sinners against himself **, with a firm and steady Mind. Root out all Inclinations to Peevishness and Passion. Have a watchful Eye over your irascible Faculties, that you may prevent the beginning of Anger, and check it at its first rising; and banish those thoughts that have a Tendency to increase and cherish it. Put the most candid Construction on the Words and Actions of every one you converse with, that they will possibly bear: And remember, that you your selves are subject to err, and have need of kind Treatment from others,

To conclude: Be fervent and importunate in your Prayers to God (which means must always be used in every endeavour after Virtue) that he would enable you to subdue and keep under the exorbitancy of your Passions, and to perform this, and all other Duties acceptable in his Sight, to his Glory, and the Peace and Satisfaction of your own Minds.

And may the Peace of God, which passeth all Understanding, keep your Hearts and Minds through Jesus Christ. Amen.

* Heb. xii. 3.

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BRITAIN'S HAPPINESS;

AN ASSIZE SERMON:

PREACHED AT

St. MARY'S CHURCH, WARWICK,

On SUNDAY the 1st of April, 1792:

Exhibiting an historical REVIEW of providential
Interpositions in Favour of the British Empire,—

A FAITHFUL

Representation of its present PROSPERITY;

And recommending a Line of Conduct to prevent
its Declension or its Fall:

BY THE

REV. LUKE BOOKER, LL.D.

Minister of St. Edmund's, Dudley, Worcestershire.

O Fortunatos nimium! sua si bona norint,
—quibus ipsa, procul discordibus armis,
Fundit humo facilem victum justissima tellus.

VIRGIL;

DUDLEY, PRINTED BY J. RANN;
For RIVINGTONS, in St. Paul's Church-yard, London;
And sold also by C. FORSTER, in the Poultry.